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Message Text

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12
ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SNM-02 SS-15 H-03 NSC-10 A-01 RSR-01

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---------- 057117
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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8134

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 9050

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SNAR, HK
SUBJ: CONGRESSMAN WOLFF'S VIEWS ON HONG KONG
DRUG ROLE

REFS: A) STATE 179001; B) STATE 179007

SUMMARY: CONGRESSMAN WOLFF'S PRINCIPAL CHARGES ARE THAT HONG KONG HAS A MAJOR ROLE IN NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING TO US AND THAT USG-HKG COOPERATION IN ATTEMPTING TO STOP SUCH TRAFFICKING IS DEFICIENT. WE BELIEVE THAT HE IS GROSSLY EXAGGERATING HONG KONG'S ROLE AND THAT HE SERIOUSLY MISINTERPRETS USG-HKG COOPERATION. END SUMMARY

1. CONGRESSMAN WOLFF'S MAJOR CONCERN DURING HIS VISIT TO HONG KOG APPEARED TO BE SEEKING CONFIRMATION OF HIS CONTENTION THAT HONG KONG PLAYS A MAJOR AND CENTRAL ROLE IN NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING INTO THE US. THE CONGEN'S STATEMENT THAT WE DO NOT HAVE EVIDENCE TO SUBSTANTIATE THIS BELIEF WAS RECEIVED WITH DIS-BELIEF AND HE DEMANDED INCREASED USG ACTIVITY DESIGNED TO SUBSTANTIATE HIS CHARGES.

2. DESPITE HONG KONG'S STATUS AS A FREE PORT AND THE VOLUMINOUS SHIP AND AIR TRAFFIC ARRIVING AND DEPARTING EACH YEAR, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT HONG KONG PLAYS A MAJOR ROLE IN NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING TO US FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

A. JOINT USG-HKG INTELLIGENCE HAS IDENTIFIED DRUG SYNDICATES
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DEALING IN LARGE VOLUME OF OPIUM AND MORPHINE BASE BETWEEN

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SEASIA AND HONG KONG BUT, DESPITE INTENSIVE INVESTIGATION, NO
INFORMATION HAS BEEN UNCOVERED FROM ANY SOURCE INDICATING THAT
A HONG KONG-BASED DRUG SYNDICATE IS OPERATING BETWEEN HONG KONG
AND THE US;

B. IN PAST TWO YEARS, ONLY ONE OF THE ELEVEN FACTORIES RAIDED
IN HONG KONG PRODUCED #4 HEROIN (OTHERS PRODUCED #3 HEROIN WHICH
IS DESTINED PRIMARILY FOR LOCAL MARKET) AND WE HAVE INFORMATION THAT
OVERSEAS BUYERS WANTING TO PURCHASE #4 HEROIN IN HONG KONG HAVE
HAD TO WAIT FOR IT TO BE SPECIALLY PROCESSED;

C. IN 1971, OF 1,541 POUNDS OF HEROIN SEIZED IN THE US BY
FEDERAL AGENCIES, FOUR SEIZURES TOTALING 10 POUNDS WERE BELIEVED
RELATED IN SOME WAY TO HONG KONG. IN 1972, OF 1,036 POUNDS
SEIZED, 10 SEIZURES TOTALING 128 POUNDS WERE BELIEVED RELATED
TO HONG KONG (INCLUDING TRANSIT OF DRUG COURIERS THROUGH HONG
KONG). AS IT IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR HONG KONG SEARCH ALL CARGO
AND PASSENGERS TRANSITING HONG KONG WE DO NOT HAVE AND SEE
LITTLE CHANCE OF OBTAINING HARD EVIDENCE OTHER THAN SUCH FIGURES
TO INDICATE HONG KONG'S ROLE AS A TRANSSHIPMENT POINT.

3. WHILE THESE FACTS POINT TO A CONCLUSION THAT HONG KONG DOES
NOT NOW PLAY A MAJOR ACTIVE ROLE IN THE NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING,
NEITHER CONGEN
NOR HKG AUTHORITIES CONSIDER THIS ANY REASON FOR COMPLACENCY.
WE SHALL CONTINUE TO USE EVERY MEANS AVAILABLE BOTH TO GATHER
ADDITIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND TO SEEK TO ERADICATE ANY HONG
KONG INVOLVEMENT (EVEN AS A POSSIVE TRANSIT POINT) IN THE
INTERNATIONAL DRUGS TRAFFIC. WE WOULD GREATLY
APPRECIATE ANY INFORMATION WOLFF MAY HAVE PER REF B PARA 3(2).

4. OTHER MAJOR WOLFF CONCERN WAS HKG-USG COOPERATION. E
BELIEVE COOPERATION HAS COME A LONG WAY IN THE PAST TWO YEARS
AND THAT WORKING RELATIONSHIP IN THIS FIELD COULD CURRENTLY BE
DESCRIBED AS CLOSE AND AMICABLE. THIS EFFECTIVE COOPERATIVE
RELATIONSHIP IS REFLECTED IN:

A. HKG'S CHANGED ATTITUDE FROM ITS PREVIOUS OVERRIDING
FOCUS ON COMBATTING ITS OWN DRUG PROGLEM TO THE CURRENT
REALIZATION THAT INTERNATIONAL TRAFFICKING CANNOT BE CURBED THROUGH
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LOCAL POLICE MEASURES ONLY. HK COMMISSIONER OF NARCOTICS
NORMAN ROLPH WITH STRONG BACKING FROM THE GOVERNOR IS THE MAJOR
ARCHITECT OF THIS CHANGE;

B. DURING PST TWO YEARS, WE HAVE NEVER BEEN REFUSED
ASSISTANCE, INVESTIGATIONS, INFORMATION AND/OR COOPERATION
REQUESTED FROM THE HK NARCOTICS BUREAU, CUSTOMS SERVICE, OR
OTHER HKG AUTHORITIES;

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C. CLOSE HKG-USG COOPERATIVE ENDEAVORS HAVE PROVED REMARKABLY EFFECTIVE IN CUTTING DOWN THE NUMBER OF US SERVICE-MEN'S DEATHS FROM OVERDOSE (SEVEN IN LAST FOUR MONTHS OF 1972 COMPARED TO ONE THUS FAR IN 1973);

D. CASE-BY-CASE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION BETWEEN DEA HONG KONG AND HONG KONG NARCOTICS BUREAU IN NARCOTICS INVESTIGATIONS.

5. MOST RECENT EXAMPLE OF HKG-USG COOPERATION WAS JOINT OPERATION DESIGNED TO DISRUPT DRUG SALES TO US SERVICEMEN. CONDUCTED LAST WEEK BY NAVAL INVESTIGATORS FROM SUBIC BAY IN CONJUNCTION WITH DEA AND THE HK NARCOTICS BUREAU, THE OPERATION RESULTED IN ARREST OF NINE DRUG PUSHERS AND SEIZURES OF APPROX-MATELY 120 GRAMS OF HEROIN.

6. CONGRESSMAN WOLFF'S CRITICISM OF COMMISSIONER ROLPH (REF B, PARA 3) DOES NOT APPEAR JUSTIFIED. WE BELIEVE WOLFF'S CRITICISM WAS BASED ON MISINTERPRETATIN OF ROLPH'S PRESENTATION IN WHICH HE DEPICTED PUBLIC APATHY TOWARDS NARCOTICS ABUSE AND HISTORICAL FACT IN HONG KONG AND INDICATED THAT SOME LOCAL ADDICTS ARE CAPABLE OF CONTROLLING HEROIN INTAKE AND CAN HOLD REGULAR JOBS AND LEAD FAIRLY NORMAL LIVES. WOLFF APPARENTLY MISUNDERSTOOD THIS TO BE ROLPH'S OWN POSITION ALTHOUGH POINT WAS CLARIFIED SEVERAL TIMES. JUNE 1972 APPOINTMENT OF ROLPH AS COMMMISSIONER OF NARCOTICS WAS ITSELF A DEFINITE SIGH OF HKG'S DETERMINATION TO CLEAN UP NARCOTICS SITUATION AND SERIOUSNESS OF PURPOSE OF HKG IN THIS REGARD.
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